

Critics under influence ? A radiography of transparency of content creators on social networks – the Booktok case.

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ABSTRACT

Marketing in the publishing sector, once focused on media advertising and press relations, is currently being disrupted by the arrival of the Booktok phenomenon, i.e., the emergence of viral trends on the social network TikTok driven by "book influencers". These young content creators share their reading experiences with their audiences and are increasingly involved with publishers. They receive books, attend exclusive events, and are sometimes paid for reviews. This shifts their role from passionate amateur readers to "professional advertisers". This dual position is likely to create tension as their communities value their perceived authenticity and disinterest (Audrezet et al., 2020). This research investigates how booktokers discuss their relationships with publishers, focusing on a book release by a popular author among young readers.

Key words: Social media influence, booktokers, publisher, transparency.

Introduction

Booktok, a contraction of the words "book" and "Tiktok," is about to become one of the Chinese social network's flagship themes, with #booktok accumulating over 163.4 billion views¹! Behind this phenomenon are young content creators (booktokers) who, through short videos, share their literary favorites with their fan communities. These videos have a significant impact on sales (Parmentier, 2022). Some authors owe their entire success to this Booktok phenomenon. Is Tiktok about to revolutionize the publishing market? Are booktokers becoming the new influencers 2.0? In any case, publishing houses have perfectly understood their power of recommendation and integrate them into their marketing strategies, just like institutional critics (journalists from traditional media such as print, radio, or television). Publishers create partnerships with these tiktokers, send them boxes filled with books ready to be reviewed, or invite them to press events that were once entirely reserved for journalists or publishing professionals.

In so doing, tiktokers move from being amateurs, impassioned by reading (Hammoudi, 2018; Jaakkola, 2019), to being "professionals - advertisers" on behalf of businesses. This twofold position is likely to create tension, as it is precisely because they are genuine, authentic and disinterested enthusiasts that they are listened to by their communities (Audrezet et al., 2020). In this research, we explore how booktokers manage this tension and to what extent transparency about their partnerships with brands are disclosed. Influencer transparency can be defined as the practice by social media content creators of clearly and honestly disclosing any paid relationship or material advantage received in exchange for promoting products, services, or brands. This includes the disclosure of sponsored partnerships, advertisements, affiliations, as well as any content for which they have received financial or in-kind compensation. This transparency is essential to maintain audience trust, ensure the authenticity of recommendations, and comply with current regulations regarding advertising and marketing on digital platforms. It allows consumers to make informed choices by being aware of potential biases in the influencers' recommendations.

Little research has focused on the transparency practices of influencers and the limited research on this topic has focused on beauty, tourism and fashion sectors, mainly on YouTube or Instagram (Audrezet et al., 2020; Wellman et al., 2020; Dekavalla, 2020; Lee et al., 2022). Dekavalla (2020) highlights the markers of transparency used by influencers (the influencer talks openly about his collaboration, indicates that his judgment is independent, etc.) and the discursive practices of transparency (evocations of independence, integrity, etc.) for beauty youtubers. But, as Lee et al (2022) suggest disclosure practices are rooted in communities of practice. Research is therefore needed to better understand and identify the specific transparency strategies implemented in literary communities on Tiktok. This stream of research is understudied (Martens et al., 2022; Parmentier, 2022) despite its economic interest.

We then explore how do booktokers manage the advertising disclosure and transparency. Our aims are (1) to propose a typology of discursive practices of booktokers highlighting the transparency in content created by booktokers under influence and (2) to identify the markers of transparency in order to update the different strategies for managing this transparency. To answer this question, we are conducting a qualitative exploratory study. In this explorative paper, we study the case of a successful French author of "new romance" : Morgane Moncomble. We analyse the tiktoks videos of 19 French tiktokers, all invited at the press event organized for the publication of her book, "Un automne pour te pardonner".

¹ <https://www.visibrain.com/fr/blog/comment-tiktok-s-impose-sur-l-industrie-du-livre-le-phenomene-booktok#:~:text=Avec%20plus%20de%20163%2C4,BookTok%20en%20est%20la%20preuve>

Conceptual framework

- **Understanding the power of social media influencers**

The advent of social networks has fostered the emergence of online celebrities (Moraes et al. 2019), that is, "*ordinary people without singular legitimacy or exceptional skills but benefiting from (very strong) visibility thanks to social networks*" (Ambroise and Albert, 2019; p.102). These online celebrities have invaded all social networks (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) and are present in all consumption domains: lifestyle, gastronomy, motherhood, as well as museums and heritage (Ballarini et Bastard, 2023) or literature. In the field of books, micro-celebrities have managed to gather a large community and share their reading experiences, their favorites, or simply their book purchases.

These online celebrities are recognized as powerful opinion leaders capable of influencing the decisions and attitudes of their "fans" (Casalo et al., 2017) and are now referred to as "social media influencers" (SMI) because they monetize this influence with brands (Kay et al., 2020). SMIs derive this opinion leadership from their **perceived authenticity**, meaning they are seen as individuals who act sincerely and genuinely like a "real person" rather than a manufactured persona (Dekavalla, 2020). This authenticity is maintained by using endearing language, providing behind-the-scenes access to their lives, emphasizing mundane aspects of their lives to persuade followers that they are just like them, and arranging face-to-face meet-ups (Abidin and Thompson, 2012; Abidin and Ots, 2015). The relationships established between fans and SMIs are described as "trans-parasocial", meaning relationships at "*the intersection of parasocial relation and interpersonal relation, combines both one-to-one and one-to-many interactions, and facilitates collective reciprocity, (a)synchronous interactivity, and co-created social relations between social media influencers and their followers*" (Lou, 2021, p.12). Also, their influence power resides in the high perceived **credibility** of SMIs (Passebois-Ducros et al., 2023). They are credible, perceived as experts on their subject, and trustworthy. As Dekavalla (2020) explains, content creators manage to blend the authenticity of the ordinary with expert discourse (ordinary expert) because their expertise is seen as a consequence of their past experiences as users of the products they know.

- **When SMI partnering with brands: how to manage the paradox of authenticity ?**

Brands seek to leverage the influence power of SMIs by forming partnerships. They integrate their products naturally into the influencers' content to take advantage of their authenticity capital. These sponsored contents resemble editorial content (Wojdyski and, Evans 2016). Numerous studies show that these posts improve attitudes towards products and increase purchase intentions (Jimenez-Castillo and Sanchez-Fernandez, 2019; Kay et al., 2020). Brands can send free products ("gifting") or pay influencers for specific content (paid partnership). In some cases, the brand pays the influencer for specific mentions (maximum encroachment). These contents are integrated in such a way that they are difficult to distinguish from authentic ones. Therefore, it is important to clearly mark sponsored content. Advertising disclosure helps the audience recognize the advertising nature of the content. However, identifying a partnership often reduces the intention to follow the recommendation.

Influencers can resolve this paradox by adopting ethical strategies. One of these is to emphasize the authenticity of partnerships by using creative tactics such as gifts, promotional codes, and contests (Lee et Eastin, 2021). Another strategy is to carefully choose partnerships to promote only the brands they genuinely like and use (Wellman et al., 2020). This "passionate authenticity" leads them to choose brands that match their style and identity, offering creative freedom. Another strategy is "transparent authenticity," which involves clarifying the terms of the contract and giving a personal opinion to emphasize the influencer's integrity (Audrezet et

al., 2020). Dekavalla (2020) shows that beauty content creators deploy complex strategies to demonstrate their transparency and independence.

However, the specificities of TikTok, literary content creators, and their audiences require further research on transparency practices.

- **How tiktok platform impacts content creator's transparency**

The videos are filmed in the teenagers' bedrooms, with minimal editing, fostering audience identification with these bookstagrammers. TikTok, a platform for sharing short videos, attracts a young audience: in France, 72% of users are under 24 years old. This audience seeks entertaining, personalized content, promoting the discovery of new creators and maintaining user engagement (Yang and Ha, 2021). These young people have low "advertising literacy" (Rozendaal et al. 2011) making them less able to detect hidden advertising content. They reject traditional advertising but accept influencer partnerships.

Influencer marketing on TikTok allows brands to reach these young people, especially for literary genres shunned by critics. TikTok, less mature than the Instagram platform, which remains the leading platform for influencer marketing, may have less contractualized "advertiser-tiktoker" relationships. Content creators on TikTok are also very young: 67% are between 18 and 24 years old, and they are not professionalized. Young creators act out of passion, sharing their interests with their communities. Partnerships with brands legitimize their expertise and maintain the connection with their followers (McQuarrie et al., 2013). Revealing partnerships can serve both as self-promotion and self-legitimation rather than transparency. Additionally, partnerships with publishers are mostly unpaid, based on "gifting" strategies (sending books) or invitations to events. The low level of compensation does not encourage influencers to comply with regulatory obligations, often making disclosure absent from posts.

Methodology

An exploratory qualitative methodology with a non-participative observation of influencers-editor collaborations is carried out. Given our objectives, we decided to focus on book influencers under influence, that is booktokers that have been invited by editors and have received books in order to understand how they manage the tension this can create. We firstly had to select influencers exposed to commercial influence of editors.

We have chosen to focus on the "New Romance" publishing genre for 3 main reasons. The romance publishing landscape is dominated by 2 main players known for their assertive commercial practices, especially on social networks (Hugo Roman and Harlequin; Béja, 2019). This genre is also characterized by very active communities of young female readers (Béja, 2019), active on Tiktok, which constitute interesting communities of practice to study. Finally, it is a genre that is very little studied and often derided, yet it is at the center of reading practices, especially among young female readers. It represents one novel purchase out of 9 in France in 2023 (Cohen et Woltier, 2023). An examination of the Booktok community highlights Morgane Moncomble is one of the youngest representatives of this literary genre, described by her publisher as the number one new French novelist. At 27, she has sold nearly 1 million copies. She published her first novel, when she was 16, on the watterpad platform. She is one of the 10 most widely reads in France. Her book, "Un automne pour te pardonner" (Autumn to Forgive You), was published on 20 September 2023 and is the first in a series of 4 volumes. On the day of its publication, an evening event was organized in the presence of the author. Around twenty influencers were invited. It is this communication about this event and this book and influencers' transparency practices that we focus on.

Using specific hashtags and a snowball sampling, 19 booktokers have been identified. The list of the 19 booktokers accounts are listed in appendix. These accounts feature a wide range of

community sizes (9 out of 19 presents a number of followers under 20k ; 10 a community size ranging from 20k to 500k followers). 78 vidéos posted on Tiktok have been identified as mentioning either the release event or the book and the author. They all have been published before and after the release date of Morgane Moncomble's book. These videos have been scraped and analyzed. Those videos, their texts, keywords (#), the number of likes, shares and comments from followers make up the primary material analyzed.

Based on the literature review, an analysis grid was then developed to highlight the key empirical elements. This grid considers 3 main type of data: (1) those related to the content of the videos (the subject, the tone, the presence of a music or not, of a voice-over...), (2) the indicators of the transparency management implemented (presence or not of different # - #ad, #SP, vocabulary in the videos...) and (3) those related to the community reactions (number of likes, comments and two engagement rates determined). All videos have been watched and coded by both researchers. The coding was then pooled after discussions on any coding disagreements that may have arisen.

Results and analysis

The event organized by the publishing house mentioned here generates significant impact among the invited influencers. On average, each booktoker creates more than four videos dedicated to or mentioning the promoted book. The analysis of the videos created allows us to identify (1) four modes of content creation, (2) the absence of explicit transparency regarding the commercial partnership, and (3) the implementation of other transparency management markers.

- **Four registers of book promotion**

The 19 identified influencers generated 78 videos about the author's book. We classify these videos into four categories, revealing four modes of book promotion: "event" videos, "desire" videos, "experience" videos, and "review" videos.

The first category concerns videos about the **book launch event** organized by the publisher, which marks the starting point of the influencer campaign. It brings together influencers and journalists. This format represents 21% of the analyzed videos. These short videos, also called vlogs, recount the main moments of the evening: the reception, the play summarizing the book, the meeting with the author, and the buffet. The tone of the videos is very enthusiastic, demonstrating both the booktokers' pleasure in participating in this event ("*I am so happy,*" "*it was wonderful,*" "*the evening was amazing,*" "*thank you, thank you, thank you, it was awesome*") and the feeling of being privileged. The care taken by the participants in their outfits and makeup (four videos are entirely dedicated to the preparation required for this event) shows that this launch evening is experienced as an exceptional moment, a privilege. The young women feel "starified" (several references to the Cannes Film Festival, use of the vocabulary "stars": "*aren't we like real stars worthy of the Cannes Festival?*"; "*my stars*"; "*Listen, star for a day, star forever*"; "*oh, I was acting like such a star because honestly, I was too cool*"). The followers' comments clearly indicate the admiration sparked by these privileges (examples: "*the booktok world looks so amazing*"; "*you are all so beautiful <33; omg I love you 🥰🥰*"; "*French booktok, my god, the best thing in the world 🥰❤*"). The **community dimension** is another element that emerges from the analysis of this first video format. The TikTokers are friends, they are happy to reunite and share this highlight moment ("*I am so, so excited to join all my friends, to see everyone again*"; "*I met my beloved Célia*"; "*we saw Morgane, we saw Lily and Linda*"; "*Océane had fascinating things to tell me*"). They even claim to embody the French Booktok community ("*Long live French Booktok!*"). Within this community and friendly dimension, the author is also included. She is referred to by her first name ("*Morgane went on*

stage, she was so cute"), she is photographed with the TikTokers, and she participates in some TikTok videos.

The second category of videos identified highlights **the book as an object of desire**. This category represents 25% of the videos. Morgane Moncomble's (MM) book is presented either alone or among a collection of books. The vocabulary is very standardized, and the booktokers use the term "bookhaul" to present a series of books they have just bought or received from publishers. MM's book appears in the list of books they want to read: "*Did you ask for it? Of course! Here is a small list of book recommendations that clearly evoke autumn. Now, they don't necessarily take place during this season, almost never, I think. But when I read them, I imagine myself well under a blanket with a cup of hot chocolate, watching the leaves fall. There is a kind of melancholy, a soft aesthetic, I would say. Let's start with... Next, there is 'Un Automne pour te Pardonner' by Morgane Moncomble, which I can't wait to receive my copy and read. But I am putting it on this list because I know I will recommend it and it will be amazing.*" (#19).

The book is also presented alone in "unboxing" videos. A form of ritualization around the opening of packages sent by publishers is performed. These packages are often referred to as "press service" or "SP," and they generally contain the book and goodies. Each item is filmed, detailed, and described with great enthusiasm. The video text is very representative of these contents that reveal the reception of the book: "*I love the cover, and the goodies, I was spoiled, it's amazing,*" "*Happy like a kid on Christmas, now I need to find time to read everything*" - #22; "*Guys, I received the package from Hugo Editions that I was most looking forward to... let's open it right away, look at the beauty we've received, this little bag with goodies inside, I'm so happy... inside we had a lollipop with 'Un automne pour te pardonner' written on it... - #55*). Finally, three booktokers organize a contest clearly done in partnership with the publishing house (#36, #71, #81): "*I'm not giving away just any book... I managed to get you the goodies that come with the book... It's her latest novel, which apparently is just incredible, it's one of my next reads, I feel like I'm going to love it... To participate it's simple, subscribe to me, to MM and to Hugo New Romance Editions...*" (#36). The classic mechanics of social media contests are implemented, notably inviting participants to tag the publishing house, revealing a commercial partnership.

Thirdly, the booktokers' videos present MM's book in the form of a **reading experience narrative**. This category represents 15% of the videos. The booktokers film themselves at various moments during the reading and share their feelings with their audience throughout the reading process. These are very expressive videos where the young women highlight their emotions. Here too, we find very specific vocabulary: the term "smut" refers to scenes of a sexual nature (which are an integral part of the New Romance genre), "plot twist," for example, refers to the moment of the revelation of an unexpected event, a kind of twist they did not expect. Some videos thus recount the progress of the reading through the narration of feelings as the pages turn, interspersed with this community vocabulary: "*I'm taking you with me to read it... I'm on page 75 and I really like it... it's day 2, I've made good progress, that moment was so funny... it made me laugh so much – she laughs -; now I'm on page 160, I'm investigating with them, I'm loving it...*" (#12); "*I'm on page 11, there's definitely a vibe... I think I just read the plot twist everyone is talking about – films herself in surprise*" (#20).

Finally, the fourth category of videos identified, which constitutes 40% of the videos, involves **reading reports** in the form of recommendations. Several formats appear in this category. First, there are quick summaries of all the books read. It is amusing to note the quantification of books read over a period and the justification that goes with a particularly high or low number. MM's book then appears as one of the favorite books on the list, the one recommended among all the others. Here, we should note the format adopted by many influencers of "autumn books I recommend," echoing the title of MM's book "Un automne pour te pardonner." Other videos

focus entirely on MM's work ("my favorite") and provide "a book review": *"today a new literary review on my latest favorite, my latest darling, one of my best reads of 2023. Today we are talking about Un automne pour te pardonner, the latest novel by Morgane Moncomble from Hugo New Romance Editions. The very autumnal cover is beautiful. Here's a little review and summary because I just loved it, I devoured it in one evening, it was incredible"* (#7). These reviews can be more or less long, more or less detailed. They follow a relatively standardized format: a summary of the story is first provided (narrated by the booktoker and possibly staged with dedicated images – #34), the main themes of the book are then discussed, ending with a personal opinion and a possible rating (in the form of stars like Google reviews). All these reviews are very enthusiastic and positive, always sprinkled with vocabulary shared by the Booktok community: *"The perfect novel for autumn, Un automne pour te pardonner by Morgane Moncomble, mystery, intrigue, murder, romance, oh my God, it was fantastic. A huge favorite for this book, I think it's going to be my best read of the month, I loved it so much. And uh. Big favorite. And Morgane's writing, always incredible."* (#8) *"...there are a lot of puzzles, it's a dark academia vibe, it's super engaging, I can't tell you more, otherwise I'll spoil it, but inside, it's just an amazing story, I was hooked from start to finish, there are crazy plot twists, I put post-its everywhere... I knew I was going to like this book, I didn't think I would love it this much... I really loved it and I recommend it 100%"* (#48). *"This book will be the death of me. I am such a fan. I think I'm in love with this book actually, marry me, I beg you"* (#35). No negative criticism, no reservations appear among the TikTokers. The reading report is also, for some, an opportunity to share another identified ritual of the Booktok community, that of using post-its. The number of post-its used during their reading is an indicator of the reading quality: *"look at this – showing the book spine and the number of post-its stuck on – and I even matched the color of my post-its to the cover"* (#35). Some videos recreate the world of MM's book with a photo montage featuring locations, autumn landscapes, and main characters with musical backgrounds meant to evoke the book's atmosphere (#8, #52, #69, #79). Finally, the booktokers address the author directly in their videos, calling her by her first name, as they would a friend: *"Morgane, listen, girl, you nailed it"* (#11), *"thank you Morgane for this gem"* (#7), *"And Morgane's writing, always incredible"* (#8), *"really, Morgane, it was great"* (#21).

- **Transparency management by booktokers**

One of the objectives of our study is to examine how booktokers integrate their relationships with publishers into their content creations. All the booktokers considered were invited by the publishing house Hugo Roman. However, it is noteworthy that there is almost no explicit commercial disclosure by the booktokers analyzed, with disclosure being considered an element of transparency (Audrezet et al., 2020). From a purely formal standpoint, we note that only one video includes the mention "Commercial partnership with @publisher" among the 78 videos analyzed (#48). Twenty out of the 78 videos, or 25%, tag the publisher's name in the text below the video, including three in the case of contests, or mention it in the video itself, most of the time to thank them for the invitation: *"I thank Hugo Romans a lot for inviting me"* (#72). In the video description, 33 of them use the hashtag naming the publishing house. The publisher's name is also orally mentioned during the presentation of "SP" or "press service," where each booktoker makes sure to indicate the name of the publishing house that sent the package of books: *"We can do the SP, it's one from Hugo Roman"* (#10), *"Bookhaul, we start with Hugo Romans..."* (#22). The booktoker thus explicitly reveals the collaboration details and the fact that they received one or more books. Additionally, the author is mentioned and cited much more frequently in the subtitles or in the video than the publisher is.

TikTokers' discourse was also analyzed by examining the vocabulary of commercial collaboration. A selection of words such as "offered, paid, invited, paid, paying, affiliated, collaboration, partnership, monetized," related to the register of commercial collaboration, was

examined. It turns out that only the gift register vocabulary is used with the words "offered," "invited," and "received". These terms are more present in the "event" and "book promotion" type videos. No commercial register words appear in the other two categories, which are the reading experience and reviews. Additionally, it is also interesting to examine the elements of discourse held by influencers, as some content can be partially suggested by the brand, here the publisher. The issue of control exercised by brands in discursive practices is indeed an important element of transparency issues (Audrezet et al., 2020). Thus, the reference to Hercule Poirot or Cluedo appearing in 4 videos proposed by 2 different booktokers raises questions: *"I love the... I told you about, the Hercule Poirot vibe, I really enjoyed it. So I thought, okay, if it's really like Hercule Poirot, I'll add my twist to Alistair."* (#11); *"The story is incredible. Besides the romance aspect, the investigation is really great. Until the end, I wondered: 'Who is the killer?' It's a mix between Hercule Poirot and Cluedo. I loved it."* (#21).

Finally, we note that the level of transparency does not vary from one video to another for the same influencer, but is specific to certain influencers. For example, the only one who uses the term "commercial partnership with" also appears to be the most transparent in how she received the books and was invited. For instance, she explains, *"I just got back from Paris and I'm going to do a little bookhaul because I have a few, some that I bought there, some that were given to me. And I have a press service that might interest you because, uh... you're going to hear about it from me, from others, from everyone. The SP is from Hugo Roman"* (#10). However, note that when the TikTokers present their selections of books read, they never mention the reasons for their selection or whether some were given to them or not.

In conclusion, the event evening organized by a publishing house generated significant impact among the invited influencers, with more than four videos on average per booktoker. These videos are divided into four categories: event, desire, reading experience, and reviews. Event videos, representing 21% of the total, show enthusiastic vlogs about the launch evening, illustrating a strong sense of privilege and community. Desire videos, constituting 25%, present the book as an object of desire through "unboxings" and recommendation lists. Reading experience videos (15%) narrate the booktokers' emotions and impressions throughout their reading, while reviews (40%) offer summaries and enthusiastic opinions about the book. Despite these activities, commercial transparency remains low, with few explicit mentions of commercial partnerships, although some booktokers tag or thank the publishing house in their videos. The discourse reveals a preference for gifting terms rather than commercial terms, and mentions of editorial influences remain rare.

Discussion

L'étude réalisée permet de mettre en évidence le traitement réalisé par les influenceurs de leurs collaborations commerciales et d'interroger les marqueurs de la transparence. Trois éléments majeurs apparaissent et méritent d'être discutés.

Premièrement, notre étude montre une absence d'une divulgation explicite de la collaboration commerciale comme recommandée par la loi influence de juin 2023. Cette absence interpelle surtout après la médiatisation de la loi influence rappelant l'obligation de mentionner clairement son partenariat commercial par la mention publicité ou « collaboration commerciale ». Il est probable que les booktokers ne se sentent pas concernés par cette obligation parce qu'ils n'ont pas conscience d'être dans une relation commerciale eu égard à la faible rétribution reçue ou à la gratification sous forme de livres dont le montant est faible. La jeunesse des booktokers et l'absence d'expérience dans les relations commerciales pourraient expliquer pourquoi les booktokers n'ont pas cette habitude.

Deuxièmement, notre étude révèle que même en l'absence de mention des partenariats, les booktokers utilisent des stratégies discursives de transparence spécifiques, nichées soit dans

l'utilisation de mentions explicites (ex. « SP » » ou « service presse », mention de l'éditeur) ou dans la mise en avant de la soirée événement qui marque une volonté de montrer ce qui se passe « derrière les rideaux » à leurs abonnés. La mise en évidence de ces stratégies discursives rejoint ainsi le travail de Dekavalla (2020) sur les vidéos youtube beauté ou celui d'Audrezet et al. (2020). On peut ainsi considérer que they are part of what Audrezet et al. (2020) name "a path of fairytale authenticity management". But "the belief that passion compensates for lack of transparency about commercial orientation can be described as "naïve" or "fairytale" authenticity" (Audrezet et al., 2020, p.564). Cependant l'association de ce registre à celui du sentiment exprimé par les booktokers d'être « privilégiés », parce qu'ils sont invités à la soirée ou parce qu'ils reçoivent des livres gratuitement, nous amène à identifier que ces stratégies discursives de transparence ont vocation, non pas à maintenir l'authenticité (Audrezet et al., 2020 : Dekevella, 2020), mais à s'auto-promouvoir. Comme l'expliquent McQuerrie et al (2013) les événements sont légitimant car ils attestent que les IMS sont « des leaders d'opinion » c'est une reconnaissance de leur statut, ça leur donne le « capital culturel qu'ils n'ont pas ». Ainsi la mise en avant des éditeurs ou des « sp » permettent aux booktokers de se mettre en valeur et de gagner en légitimité auprès de leur audience et des acteurs de l'édition. Troisièmement, notre étude révèle que Influencers' feedback are very positive, kind and enthusiastic about the books they present and they share the pleasure they have to receive or read the books in the content they produce. Il sont aussi très joyeux d'annoncer leur présence aux soirées. Ce faisant les tiktokers affichent des pratiques radicalement différentes des journalistes ou des critiques institutionnalisées. En effet les critiques ont toujours maintenu une perception d'indépendance éditoriale par rapport aux maisons d'édition dont ils promeuvent essentiellement les produits à travers leurs critiques, afin de légitimer leur position et de distinguer leur travail de celui de la publicité (Stratton, 1982 à propos des journalistes musiques et du lien aux labels). Les journalistes critiques ont une stratégie de « se tenir à l'écart » des maisons d'édition pour attester leur indépendance. Common PR practices like gifting products to magazines for review and taking journalists to press trips and product events are usually not openly acknowledged. The boundaries between promotion and editorial content can also be bent in mainstream media (Duffy, 2013), but the prevalent narrative in institutional journalism is that the two are strictly separate. Leur définition de la transparence réside davantage dans la divulgation de la manière dont ils ont recueilli leurs sources, vérifié leurs informations ou comment les décisions éditoriales ont été prises. Les pratiques des booktokers au contraire révèlent sans complexe les relations avec les éditeurs. Ils n'expliquent jamais comment ils ont opéré leurs choix, quelles réserves ils pourraient avoir sur tel ou tel livre ou pratique. Ces pratiques révèlent une certaine naïveté des influenceurs, tout se passe comme s'ils n'avaient pas conscience de la marchandisation des contenus qu'ils produisent. Là où les journalistes mettent l'indépendance au cœur de leurs activités, les booktokers mettent l'enthousiasme au cœur de leurs pratiques.

Conclusion

Publishing marketing, once centered on media advertising and press relations, is currently being disrupted by the arrival of Booktok phenomenon, i.e., the emergence of viral trends on the social network TikTok driven by "book influencers." These young content creators, passionate about reading, share their reading experiences with their young audience. Spotted by publishers, these content creators are led to receive books from publishers, participate in events formerly reserved for the press, and sometimes receive remuneration for reviews written about a book. By doing so, TikTokers transition from the status of passionate amateur readers (Hammoudi, 2018; Jaakkola, 2019) to that of "professional advertisers" serving companies. This dual position is likely to create tension, as it is precisely as authentic and disinterested enthusiasts

that they are listened to by their communities (Audrezet et al., 2020). In this research, we explored how booktokers mention their relationships with publishers by studying the particular case of the release of a book by an author particularly appreciated by these young readers.

The study highlights how influencers manage their commercial collaborations and transparency markers, revealing three important lessons. First, there is a notable lack of explicit disclosure of commercial collaborations. Booktokers, often young and inexperienced in commercial relations, do not seem to be concerned, probably because of the low remuneration or gratification in the form of books. However, this mention could make it easier to recognize the commercial nature and help young audiences understand that the recommendation is partially driven by commercial relationships or allegiance to the publishers.

Secondly, we emphasize that even without explicitly mentioning partnerships, booktokers use specific discursive strategies of transparency, such as using terms like "SP" (press service) or highlighting the event evening. While these strategies reflect a naive management of authenticity, they are more concerned with self-promotion and the acquisition of legitimacy and cultural capital among their audiences and publishing stakeholders.

Finally, booktokers adopt practices radically different from those of institutionalized critics or journalists, who display unbridled enthusiasm. Unlike journalists who maintain strict editorial independence in order to legitimize their work, booktokers are open about their relationships with publishers and do not discuss the selection criteria or any possible reservations they may have about the books. This reveals a certain naivety and a lack of awareness of the commodification of the content they produce, and places enthusiasm at the heart of their practice. This study also raises questions about the responsibility of publishers. Indeed, by allowing these young content creators to act in this way, publishers are acting in an insidious way.

Our study has its limitations and deserves to be expanded. First, we have studied only one genre and one geographical period. It would be interesting to continue our investigations by studying other communities of readers gathered around different genres of romance. Secondly, the audience was only partially taken into account in this work. In-depth work with audiences on the transparency management practices of SMI would be necessary to complete this study. Interviews with publishing house professionals would also be worth exploring.

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Appendix : List of the 19 booktokers

Tiktok Name	Number of followers	Number of videos published on the subject and analyzed
@amandineisreading	4865	7
@book_shadow	2100	2
@bookss_addict	146 000	2
@feartheworld	4426	1
@kimicollections	6411	2
@labookineuse_demeraude	2546	4
@lapigeonnedeboktok	75300	7
@lelivredeminuit	46100	8
@leslivresdelea	3500	2
@lesouffedesmots	43900	3
@lightsandthebooks	2000	3
@loveandotherwords	77300	3
@lucieandthebooks	21800	3
@matoubook	38800	2
@montaineorbookworm	8428	6
@nous_les_lecteurs	223 400	9
@polatandthebooks	111700	9
@saabookss	15800	1
@urfrenchbookworm	225700	4